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AN ESSAY

ON THE

ORDER

OF THE

SONS OF TEMPERANCE.

BY

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ESSAY

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THE ORDER OF THE SONS OF TEMPERANCE.

THAT intemperance is an evil, no one will for a moment pretend to deny. That it is one of the direst evils that has ever befallen mankind, will be equally admitted. Dire in its effects on the social condition of man, on his religious prosperity, and on his political relations. Every position in which he may be placed is alike open to the ravages of the great destroyer. Like most evils, it is progressive in its character. Without powerful safeguards to protect the community from its evils, soon the whole fabric of society would be engulfed within its blood-stained folds, and the world would bow beneath the iron yoke of a fearful despotism. Viewing intemperance in this light—and the reflecting mind can view it in no milder light—it is all important that steps should be taken by the friends of humanity throughout the world to stay its devastations. The philanthropist of every land has for the last half-century been proposing and carrying out moral schemes, having for their object the reclamation of the drunkard and the suppression of intemperance. Some of these have succeeded well; others not so well; but all have to a certain extent failed to accomplish their benevolent intention, owing to the many temptations which have been been thrown around the reformed inebriate, temptations presenting a formidable aspect, shielded as they are by the state's broad signet, and having legality's broad shield thrown around to sustain and protect them, and which must ever continue to exercise the most baneful influence, while that great moral cancer, the liquor traffic, is permitted to

exist. Although irresistibly forced to this conclusion, it is nevertheless the manifest duty of all good citizens to use such means as are within their reach, of a moral kind, and for the liberty to use which they have not to apply to any legislative body for the suppression of this vice. It is with this view that I present in this little tract the claims of an organization which, since its formation, has proved most effectual in the salvation of the drunkard, and whose blessings are still felt in many a family circle. The Temperance Reformation is still, comparatively speaking, in its infancy; it is not fifty years since it first shed its benignant rays upon a fallen race, and if any require evidence of its blessed character, and of the divine approbation which has ever attended its workings, they have but to look to its mighty effects for the proof. The first movement has been generally known as the "wine pledge," its votaries abstaining from the use of all spirituous liquors, but continuing, the use of the milder beverages, such as wine and beer. It was, however, discovered that "wine is a mocker;" the poor victim could sink into a dishonorable grave with the wine bottle for his companion, as well as he could with the brandy bottle; so, in 1826, the total abstinence pledge, as we now have it, was introduced, and it was discovered that the only safeguard was to discard the monster altogether, and in any or every shape label him with the brand of infamy, and the soubriquet of poison. It is worthy of remark that the movement at this time was directed solely against the moderate use of intoxicating liquors. The hope of reclaiming the confirmed drunkard was not thought of; he was believed—a gloomy belief truly—to be beyond the pale of salvation, and it was hoped that, by influencing the moderate drinkers, the vice of drunkenness would cease with its present victims, and the world would shortly be emancipated from the slavery of alcohol. Such a set of principles and measures, however, could not fail of making converts even from the ranks of drunkards, and the consequence was that a new movement, small and

obscure in its rise, but truly glorious in its results, sprang up. The reader will readily recognise here the great Washingtonian Phalanx. Never did truth progress with such rapid strides as during the two years of the existence of this movement. It originated in the heart of drunkenness, and it struck a responsive chord in the breast of the inebriate which made him resolve on emancipating himself, and a crusade for the benefit of his fellows. Man spoke to man. The drunkard of yesterday depicted in glowing colors, and with all the fire of living eloquence, the horrors of this evil, and called upon all to sign the pledge of emancipation. Two years passed, and 500,000 drunkards were reclaimed—500,000 families were made happy. But the movement was as transient as it was glorious. It lacked the first element of success. Started in a moment of excitement, its advocates neglected to secure the important advantages they had gained; the fortress was taken, and then left open to the ravages of the enemy; in short, ere this bright luminary had reached half its meridian height, the moral heavens were clouded in darkness, and a desolating tide rolled back upon them. Such was the state of Washingtonianism, when another star appeared above the horizon, and as it approached nearer and nearer, and its beautiful proportions became more apparent, it displayed its tricolor of red, white, and blue, and spread its protecting shield around the weak and faltering, upholding them in their resolves by the blessed influence of Love, Purity & Fidelity.

I shall first briefly notice the advantages which the Order of the Sons of Temperance presents over what is called the old societies, and then review a few of the prominent objections which have been urged against it.

In the old total abstinence societies, as was the case with the Washingtonians, no proper steps were taken to secure the advantages gained. At a public meeting, under the eloquent appeals of the temperance lecturer, the poor inebriate was induced to sign the pledge. He returned to his house with a strong resolve never again to touch the intoxicating

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bowl, and his family rejoiced in his apparent reformation, but with returning day the gnawings of a depraved appetite commenced their preying upon the poor victim; he went out to cool his fever in the fresh air; every one he met shunned him. His former companions he dared not associate with, and the respectable of the community were unwilling to make a companion of the newly reformed inebriate. He felt himself to be alone in the world, and was it any wonder that, under such circumstances, he should again fall away. See him now; appetite has regained the ascendancy; he has given way to the promptings of a diseased imagination, and again is in the meshes of the great destroyer. No brother's hand is stretched out to save him; no friendly arm is thrown around to raise him up. Is the son of Temperance thus left bruised and beaten to perish among enemies? Not if it be within the bounds of moral influence to reclaim and save him.

The method of introduction to our Order is in itself a safeguard against the dangers which have attended former organizations. The person by dint of persuasion or otherwise becomes convinced of the danger of continuing his present course of debauchery. The Son of Temperance is at hand ready to encourage his good resolves, and to propose him for initiation into the order. One week must necessarily elapse between the time of his proposition and his initiation, and during this time he has an opportunity of reflecting upon the step which he is about to take, and encouraged by the friends of humanity who cluster around him, to prevent if possible the sense of loneliness and a consequent return to the baneful habit, the man comes up to the Division Room, and is introduced into a band of brothers, ready to extend to him the right hand of fellowship, and to support him in the hour of trial and temptation. Do we deprive him of his accustomed stimulant? We give him a holier one,—an honest ambition to assume his proper standing in society. Do we deprive him of his pleasant evenings spent in the tavern bar-room? We give him pleasanter

evenings, spent among brothers in the Division Room. Do we deprive him of the privilege of associating with former companions? We give him a new set of companions, who are prepared to stand by him at all times, and to support him in his laudable desires to overcome appetite and temptation. The poor man feels a new life infused into him; he is again a man, and asserting that dignity he passes to complete reformation.

Not satisfied with merely reforming the inebriate, inclining him to sign a pledge of abstinence, we provide for the blank which must be felt from sudden reformation. We enlist the social qualities of man's nature as well as his reason or his feelings, and thus we are enabled to assume a most powerful moral sway over those associated with us. This is one of the leading advantages of our organization, and I would recommend its attentive consideration to the reader.

Another advantage is found in our financial department. We do not wish to deceive the community by styling ourselves a purely benevolent institution. Unwilling to be outdone in acts of benevolence by kindred institutions, we nevertheless, in all financial matters, would prefer being styled a mutual insurance company, the burden of which every member bears, and to the benefits of which each is entitled according to the rules of our order. It is often said that there is nothing which will keep a body of men together so well as a pecuniary stake. I have a higher opinion of mankind than to subscribe to this doctrine in its fullest acceptation, but there can, nevertheless, be no doubt but that money is a powerful incentive, and it may have been with a knowledge of this that the beneficial part of our order was adopted by its originators. We promise in case a brother shall keep inviolate his pledge, and conform to the rules and usages of the Division, to insure him a reasonable compensation in time of sickness, distress, or in the hour of death. And here, while we would refrain from any invidious comparisons with former organizations, we would ask, What society, either

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under the old or new pledge, has paid to its sick members from its own funds a weekly allowance of from two to six dollars? What one has attended on its sick by day, and supplied them with watchers by night, for weeks and months together? What society has paid to the wife of its deceased brother, ten, fifteen, or thirty dollars, that the one whom she has loved and cherished from youth may have a respectable burial? We look in vain among the annals of ordinary temperance associations for such acts, yet such, and we say it not in boast, are the principles and such the duties of the Sons of Temperance. Did our order possess no other or no greater qualification, this would, in my opinion, be sufficient to recommend it to the attentive consideration of all well-wishers of our race. Again, is the brother away from home, far from his friends, in a strange land, among strange people? is he in straightened circumstances from disappointed schemes, or by unexpected sickness? If a Son of Temperance, he can call upon his brethren, though strangers to him, to assist him in his hour of need. Nor does he receive assistance as a charity, but as a right which his connection with the order insures to him. I have seen many examples of assistance being rendered in this way by Divisions to strange brethren upon whom the hand of adversity had been laid while far from friends or acquaintances; and on such occasions I have particularly felt that it was a great privilege to be connected with such an order. These are but a few of the advantages of our organization. Did time and space permit, we could fill a volume with illustrations.

But we must now pass to the

OBJECTIONS.

One of the greatest of which, and perhaps the one which is most frequently advanced, is, that we are a secret Society. All society is to a certain extent secret; all the operations of nature have a degree of secrecy about them. The World, the Universe, the God of eternal truth are enveloped

with a mystery which no man has ever penetrated ; every family circle is a secret society, and the man who violates the secrecy of the family, is unworthy of the confidence of the community. Our Order is in the same sense a secret Society, but it is not so in the ordinary and offensive sense of that term. An eminent writer on this subject, says—"A secret Society, in its truly offensive import, is one whose objects of pursuit are secret and hidden from the public, and whose principles are often so impure, and aim so directly at the overthrow of all good government, that it becomes necessary for such a Society, in self-defence, to conceal not only its principles, but also its designs and objects." Such were some of the secret Societies in France and Germany ; and such, too, were those in that unfortunate country Ireland. But I would ask the reader, can any of those things be charged against the Order of the Sons of Temperance ? can any one pretend for a moment that we are a secret Society in any such import ? Assuredly not. Our principles are well known ; our banner has been unfurled, and floats manfully in the breeze ; and the great design of our institution is so prominent, that all who walk may read. "The rescue of the world from the reign of Alcohol," is our only object ; and in order the more effectually to bring about this glorious result, we have adopted certain forms, simple in themselves, yet calculated to effect an immensity of good. But to our secrets. The great secret of our Order is the pass-word, to which some persons would fain attach some mysterious influence. It is simply, however, the key to the outside door of a man's house, adopted to shield us from the presence of the vicious and unprincipled, to confer a benefit and privilege on the initiated, and thus render our Order more effective in the reclamation of the inebriate. Our pass-word enables Divisions to discriminate between the worthy and the unworthy, to preserve themselves free from the contamination of intemperance, and thus bound together in the bonds of Temperance, Fidelity, and Brotherly Love, each becomes a shield to the other, and all to the

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world an example ; and the Order stands accredited as the purest and most efficient organization that the benevolent spirit of the age has yet originated for the removal of the great master vice of the world—intemperance. Another of our secrets is the initiation ceremony, which is not that silly and unmeaning thing that many have supposed it to be. The candidate is introduced into a company of gentlemen, *with his eyes wide open*. The evils of intemperance are vividly portrayed in a short simple practical lecture. He is briefly exhorted. The pledge, neither to “make, buy, sell, nor use as a beverage, any spirituous or malt liquors, wine or cider,” is administered—he is obligated to observe the Constitution and Bye-Laws of his Division, and the rules and usages of the Order—not to disclose the private affairs of the Order—and finally, to do all in his power to advance its interests, and the general interests of the community. Such is a synopsis of the obligation administered during the ceremony of initiation. And is there anything unusual or dangerous about it? A writer has well said, that “if there were two Societies based upon the principles of our Order, where there is now one, our country would be the better for it! If there were, in all the beautiful cities and villages of the land, an *anti-tattling, anti-slandering, anti-envying, mind-your-own-business association*, and the members were all true to their pledges, there would be fewer moral diseases of the tongue, and of the heart, than now exist.” These then are the **SECRETS** of our Order about which we hear so much, and to which so great exceptions have been taken ; and we have no fear of submitting them to the close scrutiny of a candid, though severe public, feeling confident that a unanimous verdict in their favor must be accorded to us.

Another objection frequently urged, is, that all that can be accomplished with the aid of our organization can be affected without it, and that, therefore, it is wholly unnecessary and uncalled for. In a Tract, necessarily limited in length, it is impossible to answer this objection as fully as might be

desired. I would, however, refer the reader to the very brief notice of the history of the Temperance movement, at the commencement of this Essay, for the proof, that at the time our organization was started, some more effective means than any hitherto adopted, were loudly called for, and essentially necessary to stay the ravages of intemperance. The small number of violations of the pledge in our Divisions, as compared to the number under previous organizations, is one of the strongest proofs, that the latter could not have accomplished that which has been effected by the former. It is scarcely to be wondered at, that occasionally we have, in our Order, to lament the unfaithfulness of Brothers. It is not strange that sometimes the strong desires consequent to the habitual use of intoxicating liquors, still rankling in the breasts of the newly reformed Son of Temperance, lead him to forget his plighted honor, and break his pledge,—but our discipline enables us immediately to throw a shield of protection around him, and bring him back to the paths of virtue; and although, occasionally, we are obliged to expel the Brother who has, by repeated violation, proved himself incorrigible, yet, at the same time, we have reason to rejoice and be thankful that such cases are extremely rare.

Our order is composed of three distinct parts,—the National, Grand, and Subordinate Divisions,—each of which have their respective and distinct functions to perform. The National Division, which is the head of the order, is composed of delegates from the several Grand Divisions, its duties being to exercise a general supervision over the whole field of labor, to devise general plans, such plans having reference to the whole order in whatever place situated; and from it also emanates the pass-word, thus enabling the Son of Temperance to carry with him a key which will admit him to a band of brothers wherever his lot may be cast. The Grand Division, composed of delegates from the subordinate Divisions, exercises somewhat similar functions to the National Divi-

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sion, their jurisdiction being limited by that body, whence their charters are issued. And Subordinate, or, as they have most appropriately been termed, Working Divisions, are the great pioneers of our order, the vanguard in the mighty struggle with the demon Intemperance. The members of these Divisions are expected to meet weekly. This, however, is not a positive obligation, there being no penalty for non-attendance ; but it is expected all will attend, when that attendance does not demand a sacrifice of business or interfere with the prior claims of the family.

The business of these meetings is published to the world in the by-laws. The discussions are on various topics, but all connected with the great subject of Temperance, the leading star of the order, or with the immediate working of the Division. A series of questions touching the fidelity of members, and on other matters, are put at every meeting by the Worthy Patriarch, or chief officer, one of which especially manifests the conservative character of our institution,—“Has any brother violated his pledge?” the great object of which question is, to insure purity to the order and personal fidelity in the members. Our order is designed and intended to work a mighty reformation in the world, yet to do so it must keep itself pure and free from all evil contamination, and with this subject we endeavor to know, and to know with a view to correct, any failings on the part of the brethren.

This brief outline of the character and principles of the order of the Sons of Temperance is designed more to induce a study of our principles than any thing else. It will serve to give some idea of the effects of our organization upon those already within its precincts, and also its probable effects upon the world at large. That it has done good amid much opposition we have abundant proof ; that it is likely to prove still more effectual in bringing about the benevolent objects which it has in view, its past history warrants us in believing. We claim to be Temperance-men in the full accepta-

tion of the term. Discarding all other objects of pursuit, we desire steadily to keep the radiant star of our order in view, to present a safe refuge to the worn-out mariner on the stormy sea of intemperance. We have but to look round upon society to become terribly convinced of the deadly ravages of this Hydra-headed monster. Too long has drunkenness prevailed. Too long has the destroyer stalked through the land, like the presiding genius of perdition, carrying away some of the noblest and brightest ornaments of society. And still it carries on its fearful work of destruction, still its ravages are being felt, and thousands of our fellow-men are being enveloped within its blood-stained banner, and, chained to the ruthless car of intemperance, are being dragged through the dark valley of the shadow of death and landed on the gloomy shores of a fearful eternity.

Such, gentle reader, are the characteristics of the evil with which we combat, and to suppress which our order was instituted—such are his mighty powers, that we stand aghast at the mere contemplations of the miseries that follow in his train. Is any organization which holds out even a hope of curbing the power of this spirit fiend not worthy of a trial? Is it not your duty, reader, to put forth a helping hand towards the suppression of this vice. We present the claims of our Order to you as the most effectual moral safeguard yet presented to the public; and we entertain a fond hope and firm conviction that this organization will be one of the most effectual agencies in bringing about that glorious day which “looms in the distance,” when the cry of the widow and the orphan, the offsprings of intemperance, will no more be heard in the land, when the sounds of drunken revelry will be forever hushed, and society shall bless the day which ushered in the glorious reign of total abstinence, tending, as it will, to bring glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will among men.

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